



Student Assembly

1 **Resolution 73: Calling for Cornell to Improve its** 2 **Land Acknowledgement and Recognize the** 3 **Benefits Obtained through the Morrill Act of** 4 **1862**

5 **Abstract:** This resolution calls on Cornell University to update its land acknowledgement to
6 recognize the dispossession of Indigenous lands in the western United States through which
7 Cornell raised almost six million dollars in endowment money under the Morrill Act.
8 Furthermore, it calls on university leadership to begin taking further, future-oriented action
9 aimed at compensating for the funds it accrued under the Morrill Act of 1862.

10 **Authored by:** Dylan Carson '28

11 **Endorsed by:** Max Ehrlich '26, Lydia Blum '27, Alexander Walters '28, Jocelyn Swavy '28

12 **Type of Action:** Recommendation

13 **Originally Presented:** 03/12/2026

14 **Current Status:** Second Reading Calendar

15 **Whereas,** in 1862, the Morrill Act provided thousands of acres of Indigenous lands to states as
16 land parcels or as scrip to be sold to provide for future for land-grant university endowments¹,

17 **Whereas,** the land for these grants relied on dispossession of Indigenous lands through treaties,
18 often signed under coercion and with very little compensation, in what is today the western
19 United States¹,

20 **Whereas,** Cornell University is "...the largest recipient of proceeds from appropriated
21 Indigenous lands from the 1862 Morrill Act..." and "...the institution that accrued the greatest
22 financial benefit from that land..."²,

23 **Whereas,** peer land grant institutions have hosted symposia on the land treaties that supported
24 their endowment (University of Wisconsin-Madison), offered courses about the indigenous
25 history of the institution (MIT), and used the annual income from land provided by the Morrill
26 Act for scholarships and programs for Indigenous students and for financing an American Indian
27 Student Center (South Dakota State University)³,

28 **Whereas,** Cornell University's acknowledgment of the benefits it received from the Morrill Act
29 is limited to a [brief explanation](#) that describes Cornell's implications in the dispossession of



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30 Indigenous land on Cornell University’s [“Commitment to Indigenous Communities and Nations](#)
31 [in North America”](#),

32 **Whereas**, Cornell University’s land acknowledgement official land acknowledges addressed the
33 University’s relationship to the ancestral Gayogohó:nq’ land, but fails to mention the
34 “...ancestral lands of Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), Dakota, Ho-Chunk, Kansa (Kaw), and Osage
35 nations with which the University directly grew its endowment from 1868 to 1935...”³,

36 **Whereas**, Cornell University’s Morrill Hall is named in honor of Senator Justin Morrill, the
37 Morrill Act’s sponsor,

38 **Whereas**, Cornell University still owns 50% of the mineral rights to the Blue Hills Pipestone
39 Quarry, known as Ozhaawashkonaagwad to the Ojibwe, in Barron County, Wisconsin. This
40 quarry is a site of significant spiritual interest to the Ojibwe people and appears on the National
41 Register of Historic Places⁴,

42 **Be it therefore resolved**, the Student Assembly recommends that Cornell University leadership
43 update its land acknowledgment to recognize the lands seized from Native nations (i.e. the
44 Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), Dakota, Ho-Chunk, Kansa (Kaw), and Osage nations) with which Cornell
45 grew its endowment in addition to acknowledging its relationship to ancestral Gayogohó:nq’
46 land here in New York,

47 **Be it further resolved**, the Student Assembly recommends that Cornell University leadership
48 develop and display signage in and around Morrill Hall which explain the history and legacy of
49 the Morrill Act as well as the financial endowment that Cornell has *and continues* to receive
50 from it,

51 **Be it finally resolved**, the Student Assembly recommends that, as a tangible first step, Cornell
52 leadership transfer its 50% ownership of the mineral rights within the parcel of land containing
53 the Blue Hills Pipestone Quarry to the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe
54 Indians.

55 Respectfully Submitted,

56 Dylan Carson ‘28

57 College of Arts & Sciences Representative, *Student Governance Assembly*

58 Max Ehrlich ‘26

59 College of Industrial and Labor Relations Representative, *Student Governance Assembly*

60 Lydia Blum ‘27

61 College of Agriculture & Life Sciences Representative, *Student Governance Assembly*



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- 62 Alexander Walters '28
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- 64 Jocelyn Swavy '28
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